



EXHIBIT C

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT MEETING OR PUBLIC HEARING

A town meeting can be used for the first of the two public hearings required under the CDBG program. The first hearing is designed to solicit public comment on community development and housing needs, including the needs of low and moderate income persons.

The first hearing should also solicit ideas on ways to deal with any community needs and to give citizens an opportunity to propose possible projects before the local officials make a decision regarding what types of projects they may apply for. The following ideas may help you plan a more effective needs assessment meeting or public hearing.

Key Elements of a Successful Public Meeting or Hearing

PURPOSE: There should be a good reason to meet. It might be gathering information about local needs, in general, or hearing public comment about a particular project.

Notice: For a successful meeting, people need to be notified. People need to know to come, why they should attend, and when and where to go. A sample legal notice for a needs assessment public hearing or meeting is attached to the end of this exhibit.

- Use handbills, public notices in the newspaper or on the radio or cable TV, posters in grocery stores, laundromats and the post office, put notices in water bills, and send letters to community organizations and leaders to tell them why they should come, when, and where to go. Some communities and newspapers have their own website on the Internet that can be used for public meeting notices.
- The leaders of community organizations could be asked to announce the town meeting at their group's next meeting.
- For newspaper notices of the hearing, use a regular display ad with large block type instead of burying the notice in a legal advertisement that few people tend to look at.
- One Montana community used an innovative approach: Members of the Needs Assessment Committee used the town's ambulance to drive through neighborhoods and invited citizens to their meeting over the ambulance loudspeaker.

PREPARATION: Arrangements must be made for a proper meeting place and time. Any necessary handouts or visual aids need to be prepared. Refreshments need to be arranged -- coffee and cookies always help.

- Several communities have offered a drawing for door prizes to encourage a better turn out and they appear to be successful.

- Try to avoid having your town meeting conflict with regularly scheduled meetings of other local organizations or other community activities such as athletic events.
- Make sure the facilities are adequate for the meeting, including size, seating, lighting, and depending upon the season, with sufficient heating or cooling. Arrange for a sound system or audio-visual equipment, if necessary.

AGENDA: An agenda must be prepared. Public meetings and hearings need clear and fair rules about the procedure to be followed. An agenda, especially one that is available to the public before the meeting, or that is passed out as people arrive, helps people prepare themselves to participate. By sticking to the agenda, the meeting organizers can run the meeting or hearing more efficiently, allow adequate time for public participation, and avoid confusion. A sample agenda is shown below.

PARTICIPANTS: Make sure the right people have been invited to the meeting and will be there.

RESULTS: Be sure to take time at the end of the meeting to reflect on the meeting and summarize what was accomplished or concluded.

RECORDS: A record of the meeting should be kept. For CDBG grant application purposes, a list of the time, place, participants, a summary of public comments, and the results of the meeting are adequate. For formal public hearings by a governing body or planning board, minutes may be required. Meeting organizers should have all participants sign in with names and addresses, particularly if they will attempt any follow up meetings or mailings.

HUD regulations state that the first CDBG hearing should inform the public about:

- The amount of state CDBG funds estimated to be available to Montana communities, and
- The kinds of activities that are eligible to be assisted with CDBG funds.

The information on page C-4 can be adapted and turned into a handout for a public meeting or hearing to comply with this HUD requirement. The specific numbers for that year's Montana CDBG Program can be copied from the CDBG Application Guidelines at the Department of Commerce website and pasted electronically into the handout format.

The following is an example of an agenda for a town meeting:

AGENDA

- I. Welcome - Mayor/Commissioners (5 minutes)
- II. Explain Purpose of Meeting (10 minutes)
 - The Town/City'/County is considering applying for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program funds (or other funding programs, too). These are federal funds administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. The funding is budgeted by Congress and comes to Montana through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Congress first established the CDBG program in 1974.
 - We passed out a handout (see page C-4) that summarizes how much CDBG money Montana gets each year and how it is allocated. The handout also summarizes the kinds of projects CDBG money can be used for.

- Congress requires that communities that are applying for CDBG money:
 1. Identify their community development needs and housing needs, including the needs of low and moderate income persons; and
 2. The activities they plan to meet the identified needs.

The hearing we are conducting tonight is required by Congress so that the public has a chance to talk about the problems in our community and the kinds of projects you would like to see to deal with them. So that's what we are here for – to get your ideas on various community needs and what kinds of solutions we could come up with to deal with them.

III. Identification of Community Needs and Activities to Deal with the Needs

Option #1: Invite Comments from Audience (30 minutes)

Maybe to get things started, we can show you a list of issues or concerns that have been identified in the past. *(This could include issues already identified in a local growth policy, a needs assessment survey, by a Needs Assessment Committee, or some other type of community plan.)* We have an easel *(or blackboard)* that we will list your ideas on.

Option #2: Small Group Discussion (30 minutes)

Set a time limit that is long enough for the groups to think and discuss but short enough to conclude the meeting at a reasonable time, for example. (See EXHIBIT A for a more detailed discussion of the Nominal Group Process.) Participants count off by number and divide into small groups (not more than 6-8 people). While the small group process can be varied, one approach would be for members of each small group to write their individual ideas on paper. Feedback from each person then follows, with each person offering an issue or need that is listed on a flip chart. Each suggestion is discussed for clarification and evaluation. Similar suggestions can be consolidated.

IV. General Discussion (30 minutes)

A spokesperson from each group presents the group's list of issues or needs. Set a time limit that is long enough for the small groups to make their presentations and for the larger audience to have general discussion. The various suggested needs or issues should be listed on new flip charts with similar suggestions consolidated or re-stated.

V. Setting Priorities for Community Needs (15 minutes)

The needs identified by individuals or small groups are listed on flip charts with similar suggestions consolidated or re-stated. Each person is then given three colored adhesive dots to vote their priorities for community needs or priorities. The dots placed next to each need are tallied to prioritize the overall needs or community issues.

VI. Wrap-Up

Allow enough time to summarize the overall needs that were identified and what kind of projects or activities could be developed to deal with the needs.

1. Summarize points of general agreement.
2. Outline a plan for further action.
3. Summarize what has been accomplished.

VII. Closing and Thanks to Participants - Mayor/Commissioner (5 minutes)

(Make a record of the discussion and results for any funding applications.)

Amount Available for Award to Montana Local Governments: 2007 CDBG Program

\$6,935,714	
<u>\$2,209,214</u>	<i>Less 1/3 Allocation for Economic Development Projects</i>
\$6,627,643	<i>CDBG Funds Available through Community Development Division</i>
<u>\$ 256,708</u>	<i>Less Planning Grants</i>
\$4,161,721	<i>Available for Housing and Neighborhood Renewal and Public Facility Projects</i>
\$1,414,985	<i>Allocation for Housing and Neighborhood Renewal Projects (34%)</i>
\$2,746,736	<i>Allocation for Public Facilities Projects (66%)</i>

THE KINDS OF ACTIVITIES THAT ARE ELIGIBLE TO BE ASSISTED WITH CDBG FUNDS

Housing and Neighborhood Renewal Projects

The CDBG Housing and Neighborhood Renewal category is intended to assist communities in a wide range of activities with the goal of providing decent, safe and sanitary housing for their residents at an affordable price and to combat blighting influences in the community.

CDBG housing and neighborhood renewal projects can:

- rehabilitate substandard housing,
- support construction of new permanent, long-term housing,
- weatherize and improve the energy efficiency of homes or apartments,
- finance or subsidize the construction of new permanent, residential units where a local nonprofit organization sponsors the project,
- include site improvements or provision of public facilities to publicly-owned land or land owned by a nonprofit organization to be used or sold for new housing,
- demolish vacant, deteriorated housing units with the intent of making the sites available for new construction,
- acquire sites for use or resale for new housing,
- convert existing nonresidential structures for residential use,
- clean up junk and debris, and
- improve or construct public facilities related to a housing project, such as sidewalks, streets, or neighborhood parks.

Planning Grants

CDBG Planning grants can be used for a variety of activities including long-term community planning activities such as preparing or updating a growth policy, preparing a neighborhood renewal plan, a housing study, a capital improvement plan, or similar planning processes designed to help a community address critical needs or the initial planning necessary to get a project underway.

Public Facilities Projects

In Public Facilities projects, CDBG funds are most often used in combination with other federal, state, or local funds to make basic community infrastructure improvements, such as drinking water and wastewater facilities, affordable to low and moderate income families. Public facility projects can also include facilities designed for use predominantly by persons of low and moderate income such as county hospitals or nursing homes, senior centers, Head Start centers, or mental health centers.

SAMPLE NOTICE FOR THE FIRST CDBG PUBLIC HEARING

The City / Town Council of or County Commissioners will hold a public hearing on (day), (date), at (time), in the (_____ *Building*), Room _____, for the purpose of obtaining public comments regarding the *City's / Town's / County's*) overall community development and housing needs, including the needs of low and moderate income persons. The City / Town Council of or County Commissioners will also seek the views of citizens on the activities that should be undertaken to meet the identified needs. The City/Town or County may apply for state or federal funding to deal with community needs and would like comments or suggestions from local citizens regarding the City's / Town's / County's needs and the type of projects or activities which should be considered. Comments may be given orally at the hearing or submitted in writing before (time and date).

Anyone who would like more information or who wants to submit suggestions should contact (person), (title), (telephone number).